Redmond Air Center

U. S. Department of Agriculture
Forest Service
Pacific Northwest Region

Redmond Air Center

Roberts Field, Redmond, Oregon

Hub of aerial firefighting operations for the United States Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Region (Oregon and Washington) . . .

Home base for Smokejumpers; Interregional Fire Suppression Crew; Air Tankers; Air Cargo handling . . .

Facilities completed in 1964 under first phase: Paraloft Building; Administration Building; Two 25-man Barracks; 100-man Dining Hall. Total cost, including equipment, $580,000 . . .

Future plans for: Another 25-man barracks with training auditorium; Warehouse for Region's 5,000-man fire equipment cache; Two airplane hangars . . .

Architects: Franks & Norman, Portland, designed Paraloft, Dining Hall, Administration Building, and Barracks . . .

Primary Contractors: DeGree Construction Co., Bend, and Kyle Construction Co., Portland, buildings; Babler Brothers Construction Co., Redmond, roads and streets; All-City Landscaping, Portland, landscaping . . .

Cover Photo—In full jump regalia, Smokejumper Fred Cooper, Salem, Oregon, stands on the flight line near the Redmond Air Center paraloft building.

At left, an airborne firefighter prepares for a landing during a practice jump.

New Base for Airborne Firefighters

Redmond Air Center is part of a new era in the history of protecting forest resources against fire.

It's an era of physically tough young firefighters parachuting into remote areas minutes after fires are discovered; of crack ground fire suppression crews being airlifted great distances to arrive fresh and ready for action; of aircraft bombarding fires with chemicals.

Redmond Air Center is the hub of Forest Service aerial firefighting efforts in the Pacific Northwest Region of Oregon and Washington. It is the home base for smokejumpers, air tankers, air cargo handling, and an air-minded ground fire suppression crew that may be flown anywhere in the West.

Physically, the Redmond Air Center is a cluster of wood-frame, chocolate-brown buildings, modern in design but extremely functional.

First phase construction, completed in time for the 1964 fire season, includes the paraloft building, a pair of 25-man barracks, a dining hall and kitchen that can feed 100 men, an administration building, and residence. Cost of these facilities, including equipment, is about $580,000, of which approximately one-third was Accelerated Public Works funds.

Slated for future construction are a third 25-man barracks for smokejumpers, combined with a 100-man training auditorium, two airplane hangars, and a warehouse for the Region's 5,000-man cache of fire tools and supplies.

Although the initial force of smokejumpers for the 1964 season was 20 men, the ultimate strength after completion of the third barracks will be 54 jumpers.

Special Fire Crew

Redmond Air Center is headquarters for a 25-man interregional fire suppression crew, shown lining up at left to board the Forest Service DC-3 airplane. Rigidly trained to work together as a team (above), these crewmen are frequently airlifted, with their equipment, to battle fires anywhere in the Region, and elsewhere in the West.

Fire Bombers Based at Redmond

Air Tankers such as the F7F (above), are used to drop chemical retardants on all sizes of fires, and are especially effective on small fires as a delaying action until ground crews arrive. At right, a converted World War II B-17 unleashes a salvo of retardant on a timber fire. Three privately-owned tankers are stationed at Redmond and operate under rental agreement with the Forest Service.

Air Center Complex

Aerial view of Redmond Air Center complex shows (1) paraloft building, with Beechcraft C-45 jump plane parked nearby for quick take-off; (2) administration building; (3) kitchen-dining hall; (4) 25-man barracks for fire suppression crew; (5) 25-man barracks for smokejumpers; (6) site of future additional 25-man smokejumper barracks with attached training auditorium; (7) site of future jump tower, obstacle course and other equipment for smokejumper training

At left, paraloft personnel inspect parachute canopies hanging in the 50-foot tower, prior to repacking.


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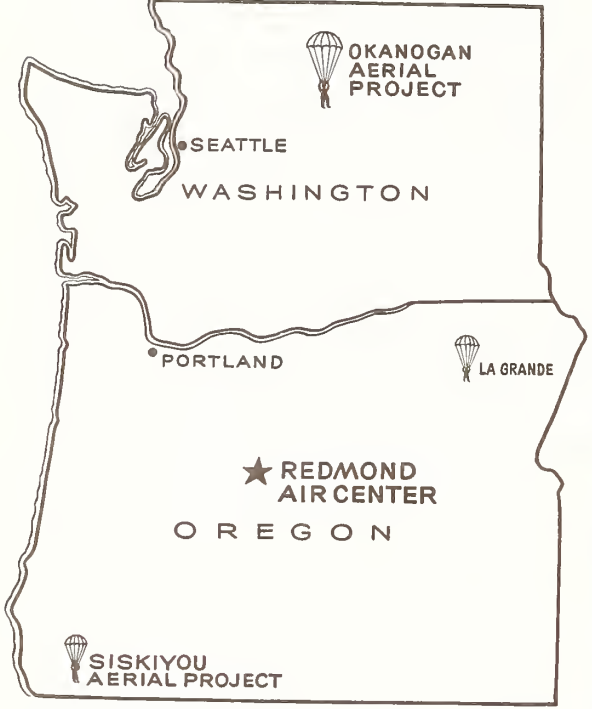


In addition to the Redmond Air Center, which eventually will have a strength of 54 smokejumpers, 36 jumpers are stationed at the Okanogan Aerial Project near Winthrop, Washington, and 27 are at the Siskiyou Aerial Project, Cave Junction, Oregon. During the height of the fire danger period, nine Okanogan jumpers are stationed temporarily at La Grande, Oregon. Elsewhere in the West, smokejumpers are headquartered at Missoula, Montana; McCall and Idaho City, Idaho; Redding, California; and Silver City, New Mexico.

Pacific Northwest Was the

Redmond Air Center is an important new base for Forest Service smokejumpers—a select corps of rugged young men who drop from the skies to attack newly discovered fires before the blazes become roaring monsters.

Today's smokejumpers are carrying on a proud heritage founded in the Pacific Northwest. Birthplace of smokejumping was the Intercity Airport in the Methow Valley of north central Washington. This was the base for the first experiments to parachute men onto timbered mountain slopes for the purpose of suppressing fires. The year was 1939, and the experiments proved the idea feasible.

The first actual fire jump was made July 12, 1940, by Earl Cooley and Rufus Robinson on the Nezperce National Forest of Idaho, in the Northern Region.

A month later, the first fire jump in the Pacific Northwest Region was made by Francis B. Lufkin on the Chelan (now Okanogan) National Forest, in Washington.

During the years since, the airborne firefighters have saved forest resources worth untold

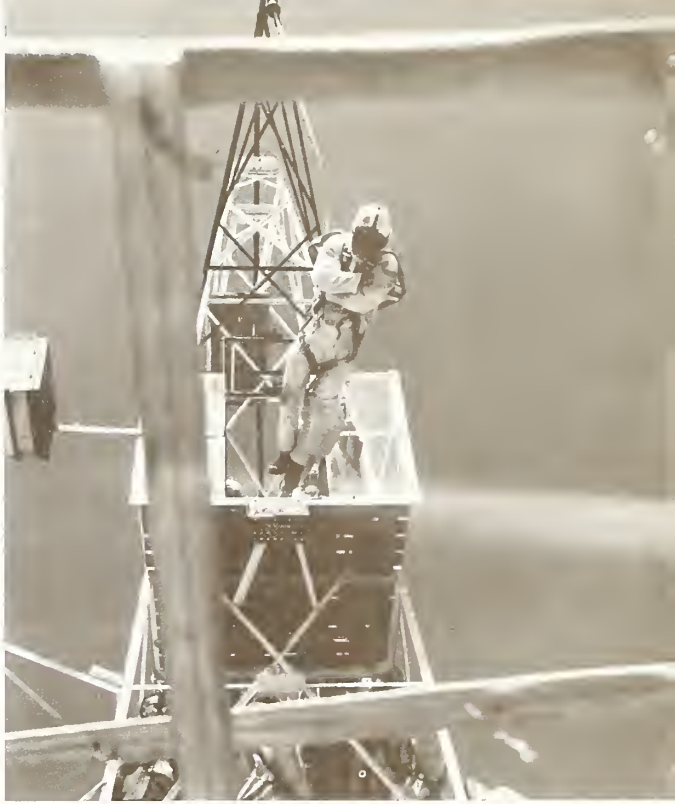
Francis B. Lufkin, reminisces over his quarter century of association with the smokejumper program. He participated in the first experimentation in smokejumping in 1939, and is now foreman of the Okanogan Aerial Project.

Birthplace of Smokejumping

millions of dollars. Advancements in equipment and training have been many and profound, but one aspect has remained unchanged — the tremendous personal pride of each smokejumper in performing an essential service.

A rookie smokejumper, dressed in his protective nylon jumpsuit and masked helmet, practices lowering himself to the ground after a simulated treetop landing. He carries a nylon letdown rope in a leg pocket of his suit.

Superb physical conditioning is a must for the Forest Service smokejumpers. Abdominal and back muscles are strengthened by this device, known unlovingly as the "torture rack". Rigorous training is credited for the fact that jumpers are seldom injured.



A jumper trainee plunges downward from a practice tower. He will be stopped short of the safety netting by a rope attached to his parachute harness. The procedure teaches the men the correct jumping position and accustoms them to the opening shock of the parachute.

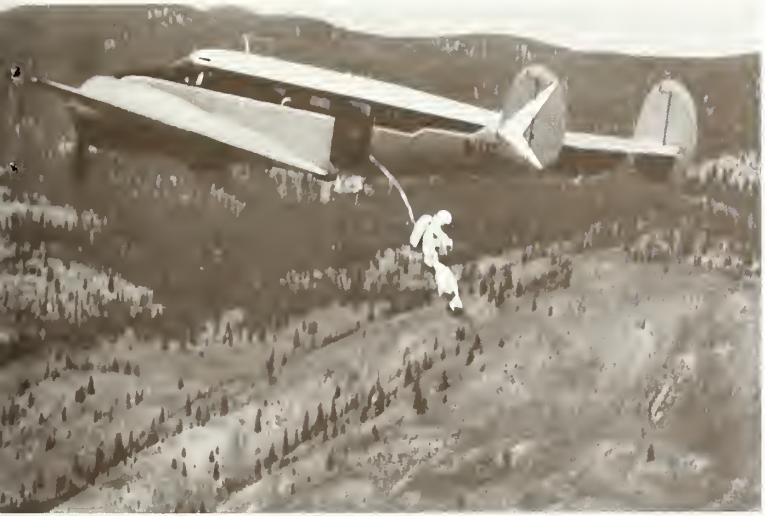
A squadleader acting as spotter makes a final safety check of a jumper's equipment before giving him the "go" signal to jump. Each man is equipped with a reserve parachute in addition to the main backpack.

Ready-y-y

The smokejumper leaps into space. The line attached to his main parachute pack will automatically open the canopy.

Enroute to a jump, whether it be for a practice or a fire, even veteran smokejumpers such as Squadleader Tony Percival of the Okanogan Aerial Project feel like athletes just before game time.

-- Jump!



An airborne firefighter has just jumped from a Forest Service C-45, one of the planes most frequently used to transport smokejumpers. Jumps are made about 1,500 feet above ground level.

Manipulating the guidelines attached to his parachute canopy, the jumper steers toward a pre-selected landing spot. Slots in the especially designed nylon canopy give jumpers better control over their descent.

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